


DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT

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To: Board Chairs, Executive Directors and Program Manager of all
CSBG and Energy Provider Networks



From: Lloyd Throne, Director

Date: March 12, 2009

Re: Your Role in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Dear Network,

As you know, our community action and weatherization programs are now in a billion-watt spotlight – at the national, state and local levels. Two of our primary funding sources – the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and the U.S. Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program (DOE WAP) – have received unprecedented levels of funding and responsibility under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) is awaiting both the specific state allocations, as well as the federal guidance that will undoubtedly provide new performance and fiscal expectations for both programs. However, at this time, we can confidently announce the following facts that you, as leaders of your local programs, should be actively preparing for now:

Expectations are high. The Obama Administration is making weatherization the centerpiece of *both* its economic recovery strategy *and* the national energy strategy. Quite literally, all eyes are on the DOE WAP and CSBG programs to see how well they stimulate the economy and help the victims of the recession. CSD and local providers are being inundated by expectations from elected and government officials and private contractors. There will also be zero-tolerance for any perception of waste, fraud or mis-use of these monies.

Accountability and transparency will be elevated. The federal agencies will be setting specific new requirements for what service and fiscal data must be reported and publicly available. Program data will need to prove how your programs benefit the lives of low-income Californians – which can be a special challenge especially under CSBG. All fiscal data, including that of any delegate agencies or subcontractors, will need to be open book and in compliance with federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rules. Reporting will need to be more frequent than before. Funding in future years will depend on how well we can prove the effectiveness and return-on-investment of our programs.

Job, jobs, jobs. Creating new jobs, sustaining jobs and investing in small businesses in the local economy are critical. Being able to demonstrate your contribution to stimulating the local economy will be just as important as directly helping low-income Californians achieve self-sufficiency through your programs.

Meeting the Expectations. Without further delay, CSD strongly urges each and every board member, executive staff and program manager to step up to these expectations by putting the following steps into motion:

- **Build on partnerships with nonprofit and the local business community.**

CSD is strongly urging each network provider to develop and implement a strategic capacity-building or “ramp up” plan that actively includes developing new or expanding existing partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, schools, local business leaders and private contractors to deliver services under both the DOE WAP and CSBG programs, both to create new jobs and protect jobs on the verge of disappearing. Qualified private contractors are looking to subcontract with local energy providers and benefit from the federal stimulus investment. New partnerships with community-based organizations can enhance outreach into previously untapped communities, especially for weatherization services. CSD is getting unprecedented inquiries from the private sector concerning their desire to participate in the ARRA funded endeavors.

- **Set demonstrable outcomes for CSBG dollars.** At a minimum, CSBG-funded agencies will be required to track Recovery Act monies separately from the “base” annual CSBG allocation. Each agency should set clear, measureable outcome-based objectives that will demonstrate how those monies will directly benefit low-income Californians, and create or protect jobs. You need to prove the worth of your programs.

- **Use this year’s community action planning process to solicit public input and refine your priority plan.** Boards of Directors of CSBG-funded agencies should capitalize on the upcoming community action plan to gauge how the economic crisis has changed or intensified the needs in each community. Each agency should also consider the national push for CSBG agencies to use Recovery Act monies to directly support the success of the local weatherization program, through job development efforts, outreach and other coordination.

- **Invest Locally.** One of many reasons why weatherization is a centerpiece of the Recovery Act is because the outreach, installation and inspection jobs cannot be outsourced (i.e. sent abroad). Review your procurement policies to prioritize tools, equipment, vehicles and other materials that can sport a “Made in the USA” sticker.

- **Engage with CSD, Cal/Neva, ACCES, SoCal Forum, ARNCEP and the rest of the network.** It is never more important to tune into all information and resources available to you. The following should be part of your regular diet.

- **CSD Website.** Today, CSD is launching its Recovery Act webpage that will carry emerging news, implementation plans and reports. Tune in daily at <http://www.csd.ca.gov/Recovery/Recovery.aspx>

- **Respond to all requests for information.** CSD will certainly be seeking information from you, both thru formal reporting and informal surveys. Universal participation is essential, so that the state can demonstrate the relevance and value of these programs.
- **Network meetings and workshops.** Show up or call in to ALL network and association meetings. Information is developing quickly. Check CSD's Calendar on its website regularly for opportunities to learn about the Recovery Act and engage in shaping the statewide implementation plan.
- **Put these dates on your calendar!**
 - **California Federal Energy Stimulus Team Webinar on March 13, 2009 at 11:00am** featuring Director Lloyd Throne and others. Go to <http://www.energy.ca.gov/recovery/meetings/> for registration information.
 - **CSD's mandatory workshop** for energy providers in April (date TBA).
 - **The ACCES Symposium** in Sacramento on March 19, 2009.
 - **CSD Recovery Act Webinar for CSBG providers** on March 24th at 9:00am.
 - **CalNeva Conference in San Francisco**, April 15-17, 2009.

Your leadership is never more important. As it was oft-mentioned at the National Community Action Foundation annual conference last week:

"This is The Defining Moment for Community Action and the Weatherization Program."